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DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS



MARCH 5



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U.S. sinks Iranian vessel near Sri Lanka

Island nation's Navy responds to distress signal at dawn, rescues 32 sailors and recovers 83 bodies

U.S. submarine used torpedo for 'first time since the WWII' to sink a ship, says Secretary Hegseth

Ship was returning from Visakhapatnam after participating in International Fleet Review 2026

Meera Srinivasan
COLOMBO

U.S. and Israel hammer Iran on fifth day of war

A U.S. submarine attacked an Iranian warship on Wednesday, which sank in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Sri Lanka, bringing the West Asian conflict closer to the Indian subcontinent. At least 83 people were killed in the torpedo attack.

U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth confirmed the strike at a press conference in Washington DC. "An American submarine sunk an Iranian warship that thought it was safe in international waters. Instead, it was sunk by a torpedo," Mr. Hegseth said, terming it a "quiet death" and the "first sinking of an enemy ship" by a torpedo since the Second World War. "Like in that war," Mr. Hegseth said, "we are fighting to win".

The Sri Lankan Navy

DUBAI

The U.S. and Israel hit Iran's capital and other cities in air strikes on Wednesday, the fifth day of the war with Iran, as the Islamic Republic responded with missile barrages and drone attacks across the region. The Israeli military said air defences were activated to intercept Iranian missiles fired at targets around the country, and explosions were heard around Jerusalem. » PAGE 14

rescued 32 sailors and recovered 83 bodies after a dawn distress call from the Iranian frigate *IRIS Dena*, which sank about 40 nautical miles off Galle on the island's southern coast, Sri Lankan authorities said.

Distress call

The distress call from the

Out in the ocean

The Iranian ship that sank off Sri Lankan coast on Wednesday was returning from the International Fleet Review 2026 held in Visakhapatnam in February

IRIS Dena, one of 6 Moudge Class Frigates of Iran, was commissioned in June 2021

IRIS Dena had a crew capacity of nearly 180 with around 140 persons believed to be on board

Sri Lanka Navy and Coast Guard receive emergency call at 5.08 a.m.

Sri Lankan Navy rescued 32 sailors and recovered 83 bodies

The U.S. has not sunk enemy ships by torpedo since the Second World War



Sunken ship: *IRIS Dena* in the Bay of Bengal on February 18, AFP

frigate came at 5.08 a.m. IST, Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath told the nation's Parliament later in the day. Sri Lanka responded swiftly, owing to its obligations under the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, Mr. Herath said.

"By 6 a.m. we dis-

patched a naval vessel and by 7 a.m. the second naval vessel," he told the House. The injured sailors were taken to a state-run hospital in the southern Galle district.

According to Sri Lankan Navy spokesperson Buddhika Sampath, the frigate was not visible when the

rescuers reached the spot. The Navy is yet to probe the cause for the distress call, and is currently "focused on search and rescue operations," he added. "As of now we have recovered 83 bodies," he told *The Hindu* at 9.45 p.m.

Naval sources told *The Hindu* that while the per-

Indices tumble as markets respond to oil uncertainty

MUMBAI

Indian investors continued selling on Wednesday, triggering the benchmark indices to tumble in the second consecutive session as oil prices surged on closure of Strait of Hormuz. The benchmark Nifty 50 and Sensex 30 closed at 24,480.50 and 79,116.19 points, down 1.5% and 1.4% respectively on Wednesday, responding to the oil shock. » PAGE 12

sakhapatnam in February.

When contacted, Iranian Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Alireza Delkhosh, who was on his way from Colombo to Galle, told *The Hindu*: "We have no information yet on the cause, we are in close contact with Sri Lankan authorities. I am on my way to see the survivors."

Sri Lanka concerned

Sri Lanka has not commented on the U.S. claim of responsibility for the torpedo attack on the Iranian vessel. Sri Lanka had expressed "deep concern over the rapid escalation of hostilities" in the widening war in West Asia, now in its fifth day, and called on "all concerned parties to exercise maximum restraint and to take immediate and decisive action to de-escalate tensions".

MORE REPORTS ON

» PAGES 3, 4, 12, 14 & 15



- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **International Fleet Review (IFR) & MILAN:** These are flagship multilateral naval exercises hosted by the Indian Navy. **MILAN** (meaning "meeting" in Hindi) began in 1995 to foster regional cooperation.

- *Example:* Think of it as a "maritime summit" where navies practice disaster relief and anti-piracy together.

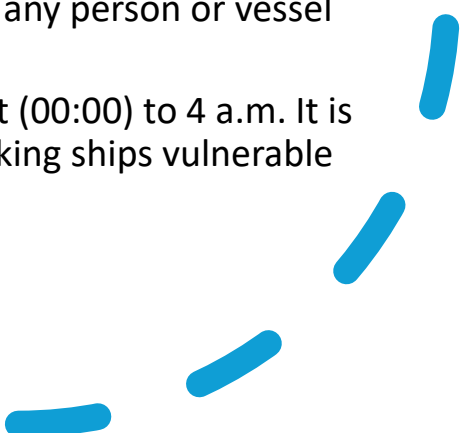
- **Strait of Hormuz:** A narrow chokepoint between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. It is the world's most important oil transit artifact; nearly 20% of the world's total oil consumption passes through here.

- **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ):** An area of the ocean (usually 200 nautical miles from shore) where a country has special rights regarding the exploration and use of marine resources.

- **Carrier Battle Group (CBG):** A high-value naval force consisting of an aircraft carrier surrounded by a large number of destroyers, frigates, and submarines for protection.

- **Search and Rescue (SAR) Obligations:** Under the **International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue**, nations are legally bound to assist any person or vessel in distress at sea, regardless of nationality or political status.

- **Middle Watch:** A naval term for the watch kept from midnight (00:00) to 4 a.m. It is traditionally when the human body is at its lowest alertness, making ships vulnerable to "quiet" attacks.





- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**
- The core thesis of this situation is the **geographical expansion of West Asian hostilities** into the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), transitioning from a localized conflict to a global maritime crisis.
- **The "Silent" Escalation:** The use of a submarine torpedo by the U.S. against an Iranian frigate (IRIS Dena) marks a paradigm shift. It signifies the end of "shadow wars" and the beginning of direct, high-lethal conventional engagements.
- **Collateral Strategic Damage:** Even though the strike occurred off the coast of Sri Lanka, the "victim" (IRIS Dena) had just participated in India's MILAN 2026. This places India in a diplomatic tightrope—maintaining ties with the U.S. while mourning a partner from its own naval exercise.
- **Economic Strangulation:** The IRGC's claim of "total control" over the Strait of Hormuz is a direct threat to global energy stability. The argument presented is that military dominance in chokepoints is being used as a lever for political bargaining.

Historical Evolution of the Issue

Cold War Era: The Indian Ocean was a theater for U.S.-Soviet rivalry. The U.S. established Diego Garcia as a key base.

1980s "Tanker War": During the Iran-Iraq war, both sides attacked commercial tankers in the Gulf, leading to U.S. naval intervention (Operation Earnest Will).

2015 JCPOA (Iran Nuclear Deal): A period of relative de-escalation followed by the 2018 U.S. withdrawal, which reignited "maximum pressure" tactics.

2024-2026 Shift: The conflict transitioned from proxy strikes (via groups like the Houthis) to direct state-on-state naval combat involving submarines and stealth fighters (F-35s).

The West Asia Maritime Crisis: Navigating India's Strategic & Economic Shocks

THE STRATEGIC CRISIS: CONFLICT IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

Sinking of IRIS Dena



A U.S. torpedo strike on an Iranian frigate off Sri Lanka marks a shift to conventional naval war.



The "MILAN" Paradox

The sunken vessel had just participated in India's flagship naval exercise alongside U.S. forces.



Chokepoint Vulnerability

Iran's IRGC claims "total control" over the Strait of Hormuz, the world's most critical oil passage.

INDIA'S EXTREME ENERGY DEPENDENCE



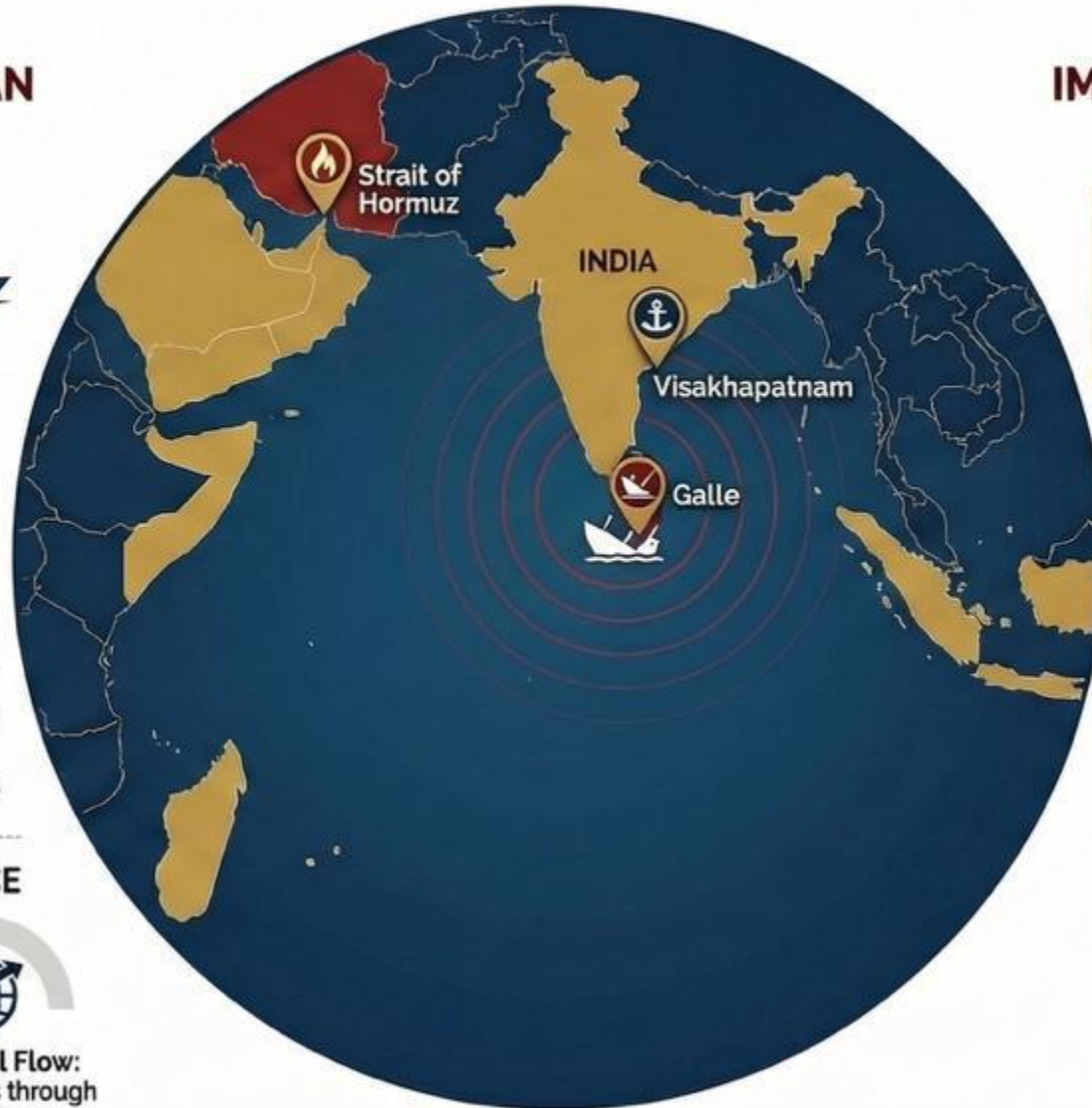
Crude Oil Imports:
85% of India's total consumption



Qatari LNG:
40% of India's annual supply



Global Oil Flow:
20% passes through the Strait of Hormuz



THE RIPPLE EFFECT: IMPACTS & INDIA'S WAY FORWARD

TRANSMISSION OF SHOCK



CONFLICT



STRAIT CLOSURE



ENERGY SPIKE



DOMESTIC INFLATION



Economic & Social Shocks

1,200+ flight cancellations and potential doubling of domestic CNG prices due to supply disruptions.



The Diaspora Challenge

9 million Indians in the Gulf face evacuation risks and remittance disruptions.



STRATEGIC WAY FORWARD



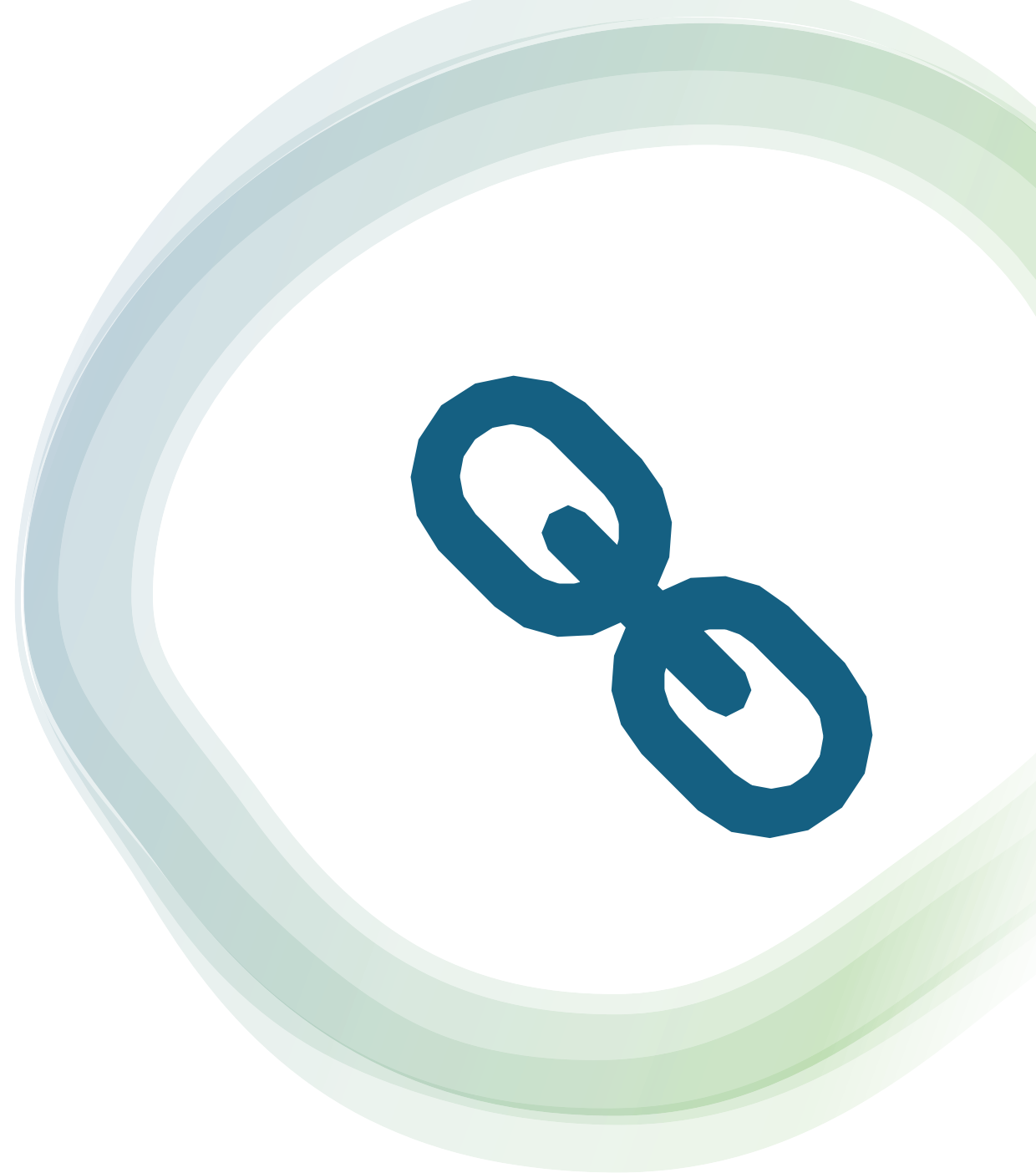
Expand Petroleum Reserves to 90 days



Enhance Maritime Domain Awareness

- **Linkages with NCERTs**
- **Class 12 Political Science (Contemporary World Politics):** Chapter on "Security in the Contemporary World" (Non-traditional threats and global poverty/energy).
- **Class 11 Geography (India: Physical Environment):** Chapter on "Location"—relevance of India's central position in the Indian Ocean.
- **Class 10 Economics:** Chapter on "Globalization and the Indian Economy"—how global conflicts disrupt local supply chains.

- **Previous Years' Questions (PYQs)**
- **UPSC 2023 (GS 2):** "The sea is a common heritage of mankind. In this context, discuss the challenges to the UNCLOS."
- **UPSC 2017 (GS 2):** "What is the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean Region for India?"
- **UPSC 2020 (GS 3):** "India's energy security is a wide concept. Discuss the various dimensions of energy security for India."



'India supports a peace process led, owned by Myanmar'

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

India supports a "Myanmar-led and Myanmar-owned" peace process to deliver lasting peace and development for all in the Southeast Asian country, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Wednesday.

A military-backed party had won the Myanmar general election in January.

Mr. Jaishankar was speaking virtually at the inauguration of the Sarsobeikman Literary Centre building in the heart of Yangon.

He highlighted the importance India attaches to its ties with Myanmar, saying the country lies at the confluence of New Delhi's three key foreign policy priorities - 'Neighbourhood First', 'Act East', and MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions).

Myanmar is one of India's strategic neighbours and shares a 1,640-kilometre-long border with a number of northeastern States. The country has been witnessing wides-




S. Jaishankar

pread violent protests after the military seized power in a coup on February 1, 2021. "As the world's largest democracy with 1.4 billion people living together in peace and harmony, India has regularly shared its experiences in federalism and constitutionalism with stakeholders in Myanmar," Mr. Jaishankar said. "We support an inclusive, Myanmar-led and Myanmar-owned peace process, that can deliver lasting peace and development for all in Myanmar," he added.

He said the Sarsobeikman Centre will support the conservation and study of classical and folk literatures of Myanmar, archival work, creative writing, and scholarly exchanges.



- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Myanmar-led and Myanmar-owned:** A diplomatic stance where external powers (like India) provide support but insist that the solution to internal conflict must be designed and executed by the people and stakeholders of that country, rather than imposed by foreign intervention.
 - **Neighborhood First Policy:** A core component of India's foreign policy that prioritizes ties with immediate neighbors to ensure a stable and prosperous periphery.
 - *Example:* Providing COVID-19 vaccines or developmental grants to neighboring countries first.
 - **Act East Policy:** An evolution of the "Look East" policy, focusing on extended neighborhood relations in the Asia-Pacific region, emphasizing economic integration, shared security, and cultural ties.
 - **MAHASAGAR:** An acronym for "Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions." It represents India's vision for maritime cooperation and security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
 - **Federalism and Constitutionalism:** **Federalism** is the division of power between a central government and regional states (crucial for Myanmar's diverse ethnic groups). **Constitutionalism** is the principle that government authority is derived from and limited by a body of fundamental law.
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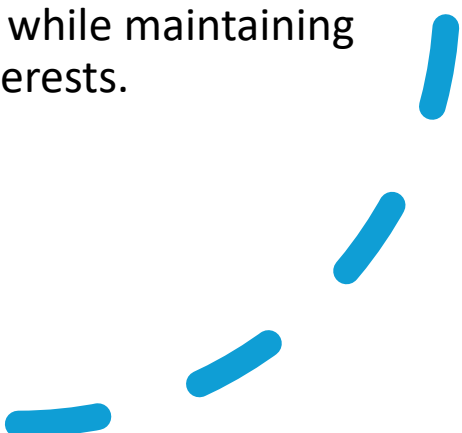
- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **Strategic Convergence:** India views Myanmar as the gateway to Southeast Asia. It is the only country that sits at the junction of 'Neighborhood First' and 'Act East.'
- **Support for Peace and Stability:** India advocates for an inclusive peace process. The "inclusive" part is key—it implies that the military (Tatmadaw), the National Unity Government (NUG), and ethnic armed organizations must all be part of the dialogue.
- **Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy:** The inauguration of the Sarsobeikman Literary Centre highlights India's use of "soft power" to build long-term people-to-people ties through literature and scholarly exchange.
- **The Democratic Dilemma:** As the "world's largest democracy," India faces the challenge of balancing its democratic values with the pragmatic need to engage with the military junta that controls the border regions.





- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-Independence:** Shared colonial history under British rule; Myanmar (Burma) was administered as part of British India until 1937.
 - **Post-1948:** Strong initial ties between Nehru and U Nu. However, the 1962 military coup in Myanmar led to a period of isolation.
 - **The 1990s Shift:** India shifted from a purely pro-democracy stance to "Constructive Engagement" (Realpolitik) to counter Chinese influence and address insurgency in Northeast India.
 - **2011–2021:** A decade of democratic transition. India supported Myanmar's shift toward a quasi-civilian government.
 - **Post-2021 Coup:** Since the military takeover, India has maintained a "dual-track" policy—calling for a return to democracy while maintaining functional ties with the military to protect security interests.
- 

India-Myanmar Relations: The Strategic Land-Bridge to the East



MYANMAR-LED & MYANMAR-OWNED

India's diplomatic stance that **peace must be designed by local stakeholders**, not foreign powers.



1,640 KM SHARED BORDER



A porous frontier impacting four Indian states, vital for **counter-insurgency** and **managing refugee flows**.



THE "MIDDLE PATH" STRATEGY

Avoiding Western-style sanctions while maintaining **functional ties with the military** to protect security interests.



SOFT POWER: SARSOBEIKMAN LITERARY CENTRE

Investing in shared Buddhist and literary heritage to build long-term societal trust and goodwill.

STRATEGIC CONNECTIVITY PROJECTS



KALADAN MULTI-MODAL

Connects Kolkata to Mizoram via Sittwe Port and Inland Waterways.



IMT TRILATERAL HIGHWAY

1,360 km road linking Moreh (India) to Mae Sot (Thailand) via Myanmar.



FEDERALISM AS AN EXPORT

Offering India's experience in power-sharing as a template for Myanmar's ethnic diversity challenges.

- **Linkages with NCERTs**
- **Class 12 Political Science (Contemporary World Politics):** Chapter on "South Asia and the Contemporary World" – helps understand regional dynamics and the role of military vs. democracy.
- **Class 12 Political Science (Politics in India Since Independence):** Chapters on "India's External Relations" – provides the background of the Non-Aligned Movement and Panchsheel.
- **Class 11 Geography (India: Physical Environment):** To understand the North-Eastern topography and the significance of the 1,640-km border.

Previous Years' Questions (PYQs)

UPSC 2017 (GS-2): "India's 'Act East' policy is a strategic response to China's growing influence in the region." Discuss.

UPSC 2021 (GS-3): "Analyze the internal security challenges in North-East India, including the role of neighboring countries."

APSC 2022 (General Studies): "Explain the significance of Myanmar for India's North-Eastern states."

U.K. museum returns 16th century bronze statue to Indian government

R. Sivaraman
CHENNAI

The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, England, has returned a 16th century bronze statue of Saint Thirumangai Alvar to the Government of India, following a detailed provenance research and liaison with Indian authorities.

The handover was marked at a ceremony at the High Commission of India in London on Tuesday. Ashmolean director Xa Sturgis and professor Malli-
ca Kumbera Landrus, head of the museum's Department of Eastern Art, were present.

In a statement, Mr. Sturgis said: "The Ashmolean is pleased to see this important object returned to India, and we are grateful to the Indian authorities



The statue was handed over to the High Commission of India in London. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

and scholars who have helped establish its provenance. The Museum and the University of Oxford are committed to ethical collection practices and

continued research into our collections, their origins and their history."

A High Commission spokesperson thanked the museum for its decision to return the bronze icon to its original place of worship - the Sundararaja Perumal temple in Thanjavur district in Tamil Nadu. The spokesperson described the move as "not merely the restoration of an object of art, but the reunification of an icon of faith with its intended shrine, restoring memory, and enabling cultural continuity".

Acquired in 1967

The Ashmolean acquired the statue in 1967. According to the Sotheby's catalogue, the bronze was sold by private collector J.R. Belmont (1886-1981), though no information is

available on how it entered his collection. In November 2019, an independent French scholar alerted the museum to research linking the bronze to a 1957 photograph taken at the Shri Sundararaja Perumal Temple. The image was in the archives of the Institut Français de Pondichéry and the École française d'Extrême-Orient. The scholar identified the bronze as one of several objects in collections in Europe and the United States recorded in the archives.

On February 11, 2020, a temple executive officer filed a police report noting that a modern replica had replaced the original bronze. The Indian High Commissioner then made a formal claim for the return of the bronze statue on March 3, 2020.



- **Key Terms and Explanations**


- **Provenance:** The chronology of the ownership, custody, or location of a historical object. In this context, it refers to proving the statue originally belonged to the Sundararaja Perumal Temple.

- **Repatriation:** The process of returning an asset, item of symbolic value, or person to their owner or their place of origin or citizenship.

- **Bronze Iconography:** The study of the visual images and symbols used in bronze sculptures. South Indian bronzes (especially Chola and Post-Chola) are world-renowned for their lost-wax casting technique.

- **Alvars:** A group of 12 Tamil poet-saints of South India who lived between the 6th and 9th centuries AD and espoused "bhakti" (devotion) to the Hindu god Vishnu.

- **High Commission:** An embassy of one Commonwealth country in another Commonwealth country (e.g., India's mission in the UK).





- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**
- **Ethical Restitution:** The core argument is that museums have a moral and ethical obligation to return objects acquired through questionable means or those proven to be stolen.
- **The Role of Independent Scholarship:** The return was triggered not by the museum's internal audit, but by a French scholar using archival photographs (1957) from the *Institut Français de Pondichéry*. This highlights the importance of global academic collaboration.
- **Cultural Continuity:** The High Commission argued that this is not just "art return" but "spiritual reunification," allowing a community to resume worship of an icon that was replaced by a modern fake.
- **Institutional Accountability:** The Ashmolean's willingness to return the object signals a shift in Western institutional mindsets toward decolonizing museum collections.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- **Pre-Independence:** Massive outflow of Indian artifacts during the Colonial era through "right of conquest," gifts, or illicit trade.
- **1970 UNESCO Convention:** The *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* created a global framework for preventing art theft.
- **Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972 (India):** This act made it illegal to export any antiquity without government permission and required the registration of antiquities.
- **21st Century "Soft Power" Push:** In the last decade, the Indian government has prioritized the "Bring Our Heritage Home" initiative, resulting in the return of hundreds of artifacts from the US, Australia, Canada, and Europe.

Bring Our Heritage Home: The Repatriation of Saint Thirumangai Alvar



GS1; CULTURE & HERITAGE

OBJECT AS A 'JURIDICAL PERSON':
In Indian law, consecrated idols are treated as living entities with rights to their original home.

RESTORING 'LIVING HERITAGE':
Reconnecting with original spiritual context in Tamil Nadu.

Object Lifecycle



ORIGINAL SPIRITUAL CONTEXT

Colonial/Post-Colonial Phase:
Removal from temple; replaced by a modern replica to hide the theft.

THEFT & MUSEUM ACQUISITION



1987: Acquired by Ashmolean Museum via Sotheby's from the J.R. Belmont collection.



PROVENANCE PROOF & IDENTIFICATION



1987 ARCHIVAL PHOTOGRAPH
(Institut Français de Pondichéry);
Definitively linked to Sundoraraja Perunal Temple

"SMOKING GUN" EVIDENCE



CURRENT ARTEFACT:
Identified by Scholar (2020-2024)

Indian High Commission files claim; formal handover in London (2020-2024).



RETURN & RESTORATION

Restoration to original home; "living heritage" restored.



GS2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE & SOFT POWER: Repatriation acts as "soft power," strengthening bilateral ties and correcting historical colonial wrongs.

DIPLOMATIC LIAISON MODEL: Successful collaboration between Tamil Nadu Police (Idol Wing), High Commission of India, and Oxford University.



GS4: ETHICS & LAW

ETHICAL INSTITUTIONAL SHIFT: Ashmolean Museum's voluntary return signals a shift toward decolonizing collections and ethical accountability.

LEGAL PILLARS (AATA 1972 & UNESCO 1970):
Provide the legal backbone for reclaiming stolen heritage.

- **Linkages with NCERTs**
- **Class 12 History (Themes in Indian History - Part I):** Chapter on "Bhakti-Sufi Traditions" (discussing Alvars and Nayanars).
- **Class 11 Introduction to Indian Art:** Chapter on "Indian Bronze Sculpture" (explaining the lost-wax process and religious significance).

- **Previous Years' Questions (PYQs)**
- **UPSC Mains (2013):** "The Chola altars are the most representative of the bronze sculpture." (Relevant to the 16th-century continuation of this tradition).
- **UPSC Mains (2017):** "Discuss the Tandava dance as recorded in early Indian inscriptions and sculpture." (Thematic link to bronze iconography).
- **UPSC Prelims (Generic):** Questions often appear regarding the difference between Alvars and Nayanars.



India ranks second globally in childhood obesity: study

China, India and the U.S. each have over 10 million children with obesity; the World Obesity Atlas report highlights risk factors such as poor physical activity levels and sub-optimal breastfeeding

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

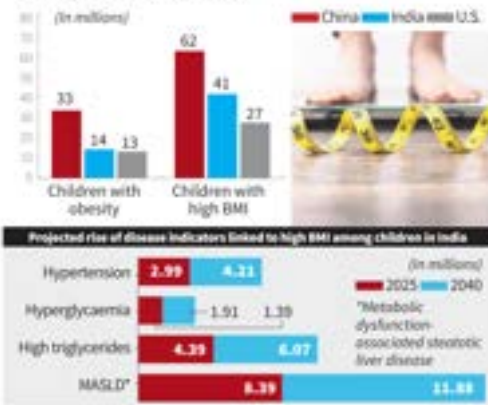
Nearly 15 million children aged five to nine and more than 26 million children aged 10 to 19 in India were overweight or obese in 2025, according to the World Obesity Atlas, 2026 released on World Obesity Day, which falls on March 4.

The World Obesity Federation, a global organisation focused on obesity, warned that the world was set to miss the 2025 global target to halve the rise in childhood obesity. Though the deadline is now being extended to 2030, most countries remain off track, and India is no exception, it said.

Over 200 million school-age children aged five to 19 who are overweight and living with obesity are concentrated in just 10 countries across the world. By the end of 2025, eight countries were projected to have over 10 million children with high Body Mass Index (BMI). China, India and the United States each had over 10 million children living with obesity. India stood second only to China in the num-

Worrying trend

The World Obesity Atlas found that more than one in five (20.7%) children worldwide are living with obesity and are overweight, and this number is only set to rise



ber of children with high BMI (41 million high BMI; 14 million obesity). China led the two categories with 62 million children with high BMI and 33 million with only obesity. The U.S. had 27 million children with high BMI and 13 million with obesity.

This rise in childhood obesity is expected to have serious health consequences. The Atlas pointed out that in India, the number of children with disease indicators linked to

high BMI is projected to rise substantially by 2040.

The report also highlighted several preventable risk factors across different age groups in the country. It noted that 74% of adolescents aged 11 to 17 failed to meet recommended physical activity levels, while only 35.5% of school-age children (primary and secondary) receive school meals. Nearly 32.6% of infants aged one to five months experience sub-optimal breastfeeding.

Among women aged 15 to 49, 13.4% have high BMI and 4.2% live with Type 2 diabetes. Children aged six to 10 consumed sugary drinks, averaging up to 50 ml per day. The Atlas found that over one in five (20.7%) children worldwide are living with obesity and are overweight. This was an increase from 14.6% in 2010. The Federation predicts that by 2040, a total of 507 million children will be living with obesity or be overweight.

Call for action

There is an emphasis on governments to act immediately. Johanna Ralston, chief executive of the World Obesity Federation, said, "The increase in childhood obesity worldwide shows we have failed to take seriously a disease that affects one in five children. Governments urgently need to step up prevention and management efforts for children living with overweight and obesity, and ensure that they receive the care they need."

It has called for strong action to reverse current trends, including taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages and restrictions on marketing to children.



- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Body Mass Index (BMI):** A simple index of weight-for-height that is commonly used to classify overweight and obesity in adults and children. It is defined as a person's weight in kilograms divided by the square of their height in meters (kg/m^2).

- *Example:* If a child's BMI is significantly higher than the median for their age and sex on WHO growth charts, they are classified as obese.

- **Double Burden of Malnutrition:** The coexistence of undernutrition (stunting/wasting) along with overweight and obesity, or diet-related non-communicable diseases, within the same population or even the same household.

- **Sub-optimal Breastfeeding:** Refers to the failure to meet the WHO recommendation of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months. Breastfeeding is a protective factor against later-life obesity.

- **Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs):** Chronic diseases that are not passed from person to person, such as Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases, often linked to high BMI.

- **Sugar-Sweetened Beverages (SSBs):** Drinks with added sugar, such as sodas, energy drinks, and sweetened juices, which provide high calories with little to no nutritional value.



- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

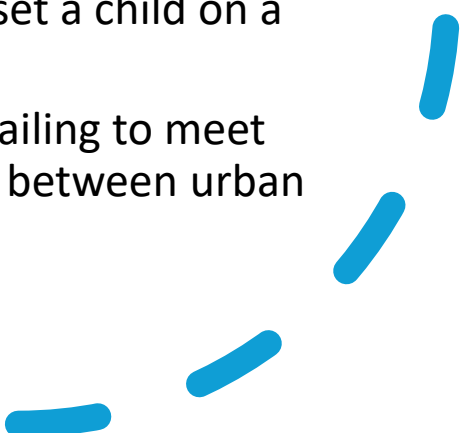
- The core thesis of the current data is that **childhood obesity is no longer a "rich man's disease" but a looming national epidemic** driven by systemic lifestyle shifts.

- **The Scale of the Crisis:** India houses over 41 million children with high BMI. The sheer volume (second only to China) suggests that the healthcare infrastructure will face immense pressure from NCDs in the coming decades.

- **The Failure of Global Targets:** The world missed the 2025 target to halve the rise in childhood obesity. This indicates that current interventions are either too weak or misaligned with the reality of food environments.

- **The "Early Life" Factor:** The report identifies a lack of exclusive breastfeeding and the early introduction of sugary drinks (averaging 50 ml/day for young children) as primary "triggers" that set a child on a trajectory toward obesity.

- **Sedentary Adolescence:** With 74% of adolescents failing to meet physical activity standards, there is a clear disconnect between urban design, school curriculum, and physical health.



- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-Independence to 1990s:** The primary focus of Indian health policy was "famine prevention" and "infectious disease control." Obesity was statistically invisible.

- **Post-Liberalization (1991):** The opening of the economy led to the "Nutrition Transition." Increased availability of processed foods and the rise of the middle class shifted diets from traditional grains to refined carbohydrates and fats.

- **Early 2000s:** Growth of the IT sector and urbanization led to more sedentary "desk jobs" and a shift in childhood play from "ground to screen."

- **2010s-Present:** The emergence of "Food Deserts" and "Food Swamps" (areas with easy access to junk food but no fresh produce) in urban India. The government launched **Eat Right India** and **Fit India Movement**, recognizing the shift from calorie deficiency to "hidden hunger" and obesity.



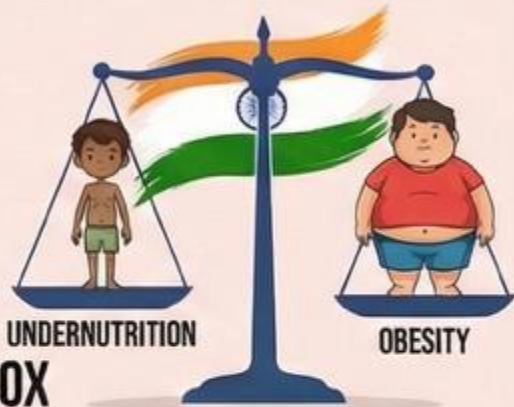
Childhood Obesity in India: The Silent Emergency

THE CRISIS — SCALE & TRIGGERS



THE DOUBLE BURDEN PARADOX

The balanced nutrition tragedy: — Coexistence of **undernutrition** and **obesity** within the same communities and households.



PRIMARY TRIGGERS OF THE CRISIS

SEDENTARY LIFESTYLES
74% OF ADOLESCENTS INACTIVE



EARLY INTAKE OF SUGAR-SWEETENED BEVERAGES

Rising consumption of aerated drinks



WAY FORWARD — POLICY & GOVERNANCE

FISCAL & REGULATORY LEVERS



Implement “**Sugar Taxes**” on aerated drinks and mandatory “**Front-of-Pack Labeling**” (FOPL).



SCHOOL-CENTRIC INTERVENTIONS

Ban junk food near schools and transition **Physical Education** into a core, graded subject.



INDIA RANKS 2ND GLOBALLY IN CHILDHOOD OBESITY

OVER 41 MILLION CHILDREN (AGES 5-19) HAVE HIGH BMI, TRAILING ONLY CHINA.

PROJECTED HEALTH RISKS BY 2040

	Current	2040
Obese Children (5-19):	~14 Million	~20 Million
High BMI Population:	~41 Million	~56 Million
Disease Risk:	Rising NCDs	Surge in Early Diabetes/Hypertension

THE LIFE-COURSE APPROACH

Prioritizing the first 1000 days, including exclusive breastfeeding, to prevent epigenetic obesity triggers.



Linkages with NCERTs

- Class 6 (Science) - Food: Where Does It Come From?:** Basic understanding of nutrients.
- Class 9 (Economics) - Food Security in India:** While the chapter focuses on availability, the "quality" aspect of food security is now relevant.
- Class 12 (Biology) - Human Health and Disease:** Understanding lifestyle diseases and the physiological impact of poor diet.

Previous Years' UPSC Questions

- GS 2 (2017):** "Hunger and Poverty are the biggest challenges for India. To what extent have health policies addressed these?"
- GS 2 (2020):** "In order to enhance the prospects of social development, India hopes to achieve 'Health for All'. Discuss."
- GS 3 (2021):** "How far is the integrated farming system helpful in sustaining agricultural production?" (Relevant in the context of crop diversification for better nutrition).

What sparked the DoD-Anthropic clash?

Why did the DoD label Anthropic a supply chain risk? Did protections against surveillance and autonomous weapons trigger the fallout? Why did Anthropic refuse unrestricted access? Why was OpenAI able to negotiate terms that Anthropic rejected?

EXPLAINER

Aron Deep

The story so far:

The U.S. Department of Defence (styled as the Department of War under the second Donald Trump administration) has entered into a public spat with the AI firm Anthropic, which makes the Claude AI product. The DoD has threatened to designate Anthropic a “supply chain risk,” dissuading a wide variety of firms that work with the U.S. government from patronising Anthropic’s products. ChatGPT maker OpenAI subsequently entered into the picture, obtaining an agreement it said was not radically different from what Anthropic wanted.

What is Claude?

Claude is an AI chatbot that helps organisations and individual users create and modify code. Its Claude Code product has been received extraordinarily well due to its capabilities. Claude Code is among the few AI products that is run with extremely powerful large language models (LLMs) while also supporting on-device creation and editing of tools, once it has access to a range of software libraries to work with.

The product is very compelling to the defence establishment because it can iterate on high-tech weapons and defence systems. Recruitment of programmers for these systems tends to be slow, as any critical weapons system is protected by several layers of secrecy, necessitating security clearances that can be time-consuming.

Claude Code has been a compelling proposition for the DoD, as it likely allows



REUTERS

for iteration on programmes that drive its technology quickly. While it does not execute programming tasks perfectly all the time, it performs well enough that development timelines have been shrunk in organisations that have deployed it widely, especially among experienced software developers.

Why did Anthropic clash with the DoD?

Anthropic was onboarded to the DoD as a part of a \$200 million contract last June, which allowed the U.S. government to use Claude’s services from dedicated infrastructure hosted by Amazon Web Services.

The issues between the firm and the DoD started on January 9, when defence secretary Pete Hegseth published a memorandum entitled “Accelerating America’s Military AI Dominance,” in which he called for the elimination of “blockers to data sharing, Authorizations

to Operate (ATOs), test and evaluation and certification, contracting, hiring and talent management, and other policies that inhibit rapid experimentation and fielding”. Anthropic has a much-publicised “constitution” for Claude that discourages the model from supporting widespread surveillance and enabling fully autonomous weaponry. Dario Amodei, the firm’s co-founder, insisted on strong language in the agreement between the DoD and Anthropic to bake in protections against domestic surveillance of U.S. residents and enable fully autonomous weaponry.

The firm was given until last Friday to relent and let the DoD have completely unrestricted access to its models. It refused, saying in a blog post that it would help the DoD transition to a new provider.

The DoD then classified Anthropic as a supply chain risk, a designation usually applied to firms that have such dodgy practices that their products can provide

foreign adversaries a backdoor into critical systems. While this designation only disallows DoD suppliers and partners from using Claude on systems dedicated to DoD, there are concerns that executives may lean toward caution and completely remove ties with Claude.

What is OpenAI’s agreement?

OpenAI negotiated an agreement with the DoD that the former claims has the same protections against surveillance and fully autonomous weaponry that Anthropic sought. It is not fully clear why OpenAI was able to land this deal while Anthropic was cast out. “The Department of War may use the AI System for all lawful purposes, consistent with applicable law, operational requirements, and well-established safety and oversight protocols,” a portion of the agreement made public by OpenAI said.

“The AI System will not be used to independently direct autonomous weapons in any case where law, regulation, or Department policy requires human control, nor will it be used to assume other high-stakes decisions that require approval by a human decision maker under the same authorities.” Anthropic is reported to have sought greater clarity in the agreement’s legal language that would prohibit the use cases described above, even if they were legalised.

“We think our red lines are more enforceable here because deployment is limited to cloud-only (not at the edge), keeps our safety stack working in the way we think is best, and keeps cleared OpenAI personnel in the loop,” OpenAI said in a statement. “We don’t know why Anthropic could not reach this deal, and we hope that they and more labs will consider it.”

THE GIST

▼ The DoD classified Anthropic as a supply chain risk after the firm refused to grant completely unrestricted access to its models, despite Claude Code being seen as a way to shrink development timelines and enable faster iteration on technology programmes.

▼ While the designation formally bars DoD suppliers from using Claude on systems dedicated to the DoD, there are concerns executives may lean toward caution and completely remove ties with the firm.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Supply Chain Risk:** A designation usually reserved for entities that pose a security threat (like espionage or sabotage) to the defense infrastructure.

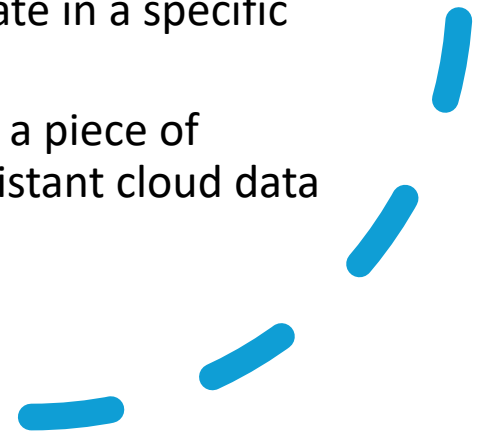
- *Example:* If a software provider has "backdoors" that allow a foreign power to shut down a power grid, they are a supply chain risk.

- **Constitutional AI:** A method developed by Anthropic where the AI is trained to follow a specific set of rules or "values" (its constitution) to ensure it remains helpful and harmless without constant human intervention.

- **Autonomous Weaponry:** Weapons systems that can select and engage targets without further intervention by a human operator.

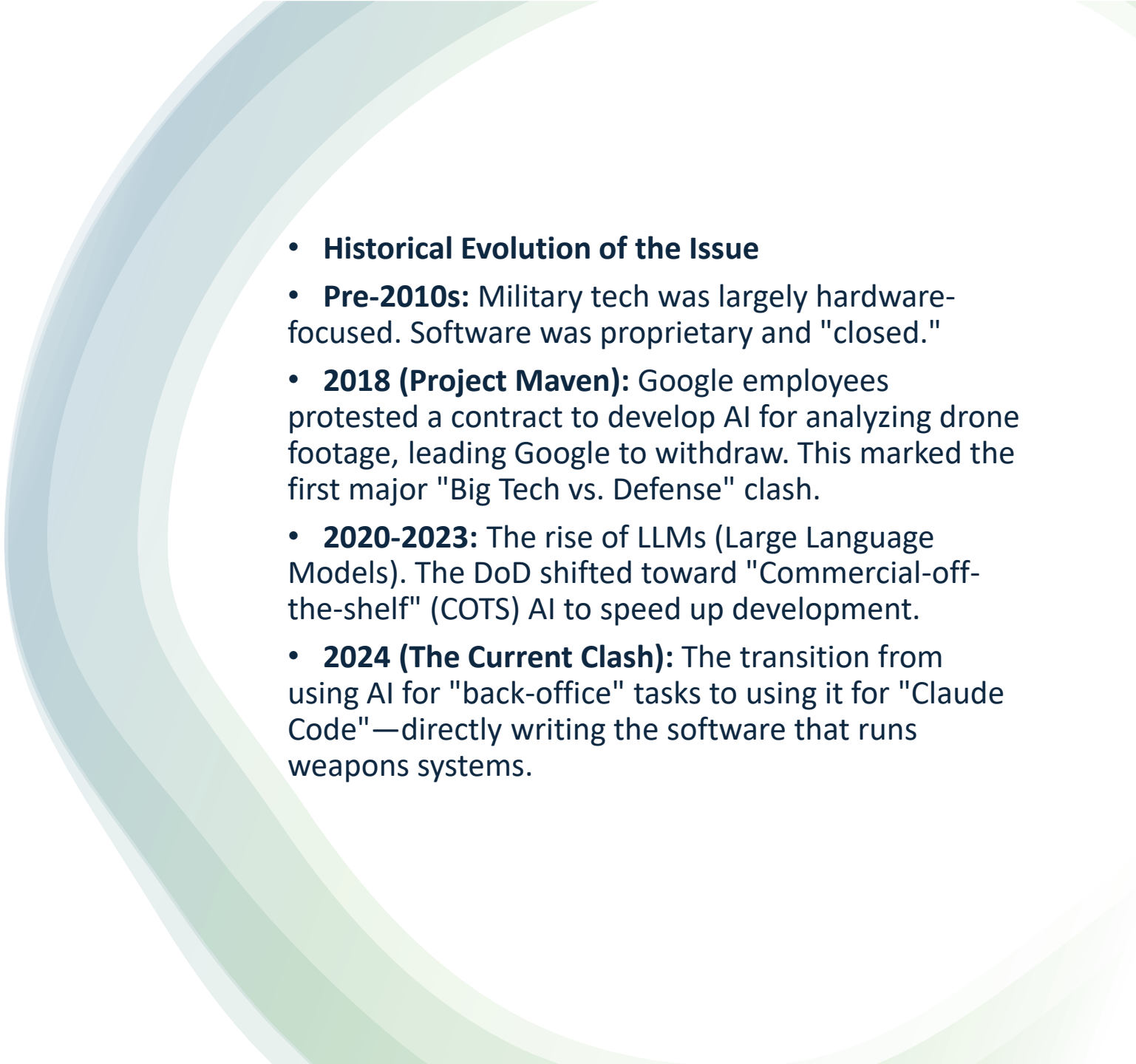
- **Authorization to Operate (ATO):** A formal declaration by a high-ranking official that an IT system is approved to operate in a specific security posture.

- **On-Device/Edge Computing:** Running AI locally on a piece of hardware (like a drone or a laptop) rather than in a distant cloud data center.





- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**
- **The DoD's Stance:** The Department emphasizes "Military AI Dominance." They argue that bureaucratic "blockers"—including strict safety protocols and data-sharing limits—hinder the rapid experimentation needed to stay ahead of global adversaries.
- **Anthropic's Stance:** They refuse to compromise on their "red lines," specifically prohibiting their AI from being used for domestic surveillance or the independent direction of lethal autonomous weapons. They sought legally binding language that would persist even if future policies changed.
- **The OpenAI Contrast:** OpenAI secured a deal by using more flexible language. While they claim to maintain similar safety standards, their agreement allows for use "consistent with Department policy," which provides the DoD more wiggle room to redefine those policies as needs evolve.

- 
- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
 - **Pre-2010s:** Military tech was largely hardware-focused. Software was proprietary and "closed."
 - **2018 (Project Maven):** Google employees protested a contract to develop AI for analyzing drone footage, leading Google to withdraw. This marked the first major "Big Tech vs. Defense" clash.
 - **2020-2023:** The rise of LLMs (Large Language Models). The DoD shifted toward "Commercial-off-the-shelf" (COTS) AI to speed up development.
 - **2024 (The Current Clash):** The transition from using AI for "back-office" tasks to using it for "Claude Code"—directly writing the software that runs weapons systems.

AI WARFARE: THE CLASH OF MILITARY DOMINANCE VS. ETHICAL GUARDRAILS

A Strategic and Ethical Conflict for Civil Service Aspirants

RIVAL PARADIGMS: REALISM VS. ETHICS

DoD's "MILITARY AI DOMINANCE"



Prioritizes rapid experimentation;
Seeks unrestricted access for rapid field deployment.



THE "SUPPLY CHAIN" LABEL AS A WEAPON

Redefined "risk" from technical vulnerability to ethical/policy non-compliance.

VS

ANTHROPIC's "CONSTITUTIONAL AI"



Enforces strict rules against lethal autonomous use; Prohibits surveillance and independent direction of lethal weapons.

THE TACTICAL DISCONNECT & STAKEHOLDERS



THE OPENAI CONTRAST: FLEXIBLE VS. BINDING
Secured a deal by using flexible language "consistent with Department policy."



CLOUD-ONLY VS. EDGE COMPUTING
Anthropic insists on Cloud-only to maintain safety oversight.



SECURE CLOUD



EDGE COMPUTING

DoD wants Edge for drones.

CLAUDE CODE AS A FORCE MULTIPLIER



AI that writes software directly for weapon systems, solving the human programmer bottleneck.

STAKEHOLDER COMPARISON ON LETHAL USE & CORE VALUES

ENTITY	CORE VALUE	STANCE ON LETHAL USE
Dept. of Defense	National Security	Seeks unrestricted access for rapid field deployment.
Anthropic	Ethical Safety	Prohibits surveillance and independent direction of lethal weapons.
OpenAI	Pragmatic Partnership	Allows use consistent with evolving Department of Defense policies.

THE UPSC CORNER (GS SYLLABUS LINKAGE)



GS PAPER 3: SCIENCE & TECH

Covers AI applications, internal security, and management of emerging technological challenges.



GS PAPER 4: ETHICS

Explores the "Mortal Dilemma"—human empathy versus the precision of amoral AI.

- **Linkages with NCERTs**
- **Class 12 Political Science (Contemporary World Politics):** Chapter on "Security in the Contemporary World." Link: Traditional vs. Non-traditional notions of security.
- **Class 10 Civics:** "Democratic Politics," specifically the balance between state power and individual rights (Surveillance angle).

- **Previous Years' UPSC Questions**
- **GS 3 (2019):** "What is the Cyber-Physical System? How can AI be used in internal security?"
- **GS 4 (2021):** "The ethical dilemma between national security and individual privacy."
- **GS 3 (2023):** "Discuss the role of AI in the defense sector and the challenges associated with it."

'Unilateral moves generate strong resistance, damage U.S. credibility'

Wang Dong, a leading Chinese expert on global governance, shares a perspective on how the war on Iran by the United States and Israel, and the ongoing regional crisis is being seen in Beijing

INTERVIEW

Wang Dong

Ananth Krishnan
BEIJING

In an interview with *The Hindu*, Wang Dong, professor at the School of International Studies at Peking University and executive director of the Institute for Global Cooperation and Understanding, who is a leading Chinese expert on global governance and China-U.S. relations, shares a perspective on how the attack on Iran by the U.S. and Israel, and the ongoing crisis engulfing West Asia, is being seen in Beijing.

How do you view the strikes by the U.S. and

Israel and the latest developments in Iran? Are you surprised?

The latest military strikes against Iran have triggered a dangerous escalation in the Middle East [West Asia], pushing the region to the brink of a full-scale conflict. As an observer, I am deeply alarmed, rather than surprised. For years, tensions have been building over regional security, nuclear non-proliferation, and external intervention. What has happened is a reckless breakdown of restraint, violating the sovereignty of a UN member state and disregarding basic norms of international relations. Such moves will not resolve disputes.

China's initial official statement on February

28 said it was "highly concerned over the military strikes" and called "for an immediate stop of the military actions". But it did not condemn the strikes, which struck me as a rather measured response.

First, I need to correct this factual inaccuracy: China has explicitly and clearly condemned these military strikes. China's position is consistent and firm. It opposes and condemns the use of force against sovereign states, stresses respect for sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, and calls for an immediate end to military actions. This is not "measured restraint" but a principled stand anchored in the UN Charter and inter-



national law.

Have the developments in Venezuela and now Iran changed your view of, firstly, U.S. foreign policy under Trump, and secondly, how we might look at U.S. power in the world today?

Recent interventions in Venezuela and Iran reveal a

consistent pattern: a reliance on unilateral coercion, regime-change attempts, and military means as tools of foreign policy. This approach reflects a belief in military primacy and a disregard for international law and sovereign equality.

As for U.S. power, these actions show that the U.S. still possesses strong military and coercive capabilities, but they also expose the limits of military supremacy.

Have the past few months changed your view of the world order as it stands today? Do these events speak to a world that's still very much unipolar, or on the other hand, do these developments in some sense reflect a transition away from a unipolar, U.S.-led world?

The past months have reinforced my judgment: we are in an era of transition from unipolarity to multipolarity, not a still unipolar world.

The U.S. still tries to act unilaterally, but it faces stronger pushback from sovereign states, regional groups and global public opinion. More countries refuse to choose sides or accept hegemonic dictates. The very fact that many nations, including major powers, condemn or oppose military strikes shows that the old unipolar system no longer works. These crises are not proof of lasting unipolar dominance; they are the last spasms of a fading order. The trend toward greater pluralism, multipolarity and rule of law is irreversible.

Going back to the U.S. war in Iraq, what impact do you think it had on both China-U.S. relations and China's rise in the decades since? Do you see any parallels today?

The Iraq War was a turning point. It drained U.S. resources, eroded its moral authority, and diverted its strategic focus, creating a relatively permissive external environment for China's development. It also deepened global scepticism about unilateral military intervention. The lesson from Iraq is clear. Military ventures do not bring victory or stability. They bring chaos and long-term decline. That lesson must not be ignored. (Full interview at: newsth.live/WangDong)

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Unilateralism:** A state's strategy of acting alone without the consent or support of the international community or multilateral institutions (e.g., the UN).

- *Example:* The 2003 invasion of Iraq without a specific UN Security Council mandate.

- **Multipolarity:** A distribution of power in which more than two nation-states have nearly equal amounts of military, cultural, and economic influence.

- *Example:* The current global stage where the U.S., China, the EU, India, and Russia all play decisive roles.

- **Sovereignty & Territorial Integrity:** The principle that a state has supreme authority over its territory and that other states should not intervene in its internal affairs. This is the bedrock of the **Westphalian System**.

- **Global Governance:** The movement towards political cooperation among transnational actors, aimed at negotiating responses to problems that affect more than one state or region.

- **Hegemony:** The political, economic, or military predominance or control of one state over others.



- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core thesis of the discourse is that **unilateral military interventionism is a failing strategy** that accelerates the decline of the existing superpower while catalyzing a transition to a more diverse world order.

- **The Critique of Force:** Military strikes are viewed not as solutions, but as "reckless breakdowns of restraint." The argument is that force cannot resolve deep-seated regional disputes involving nuclear non-proliferation or security.

- **The Limits of Hard Power:** While the U.S. retains "military primacy," the author argues that "hard power alone cannot sustain legitimate leadership." It creates a "credibility deficit" and encourages other nations to "counter-balance" or resist.

- **The Transition Thesis:** We are currently in the "last spasms of a fading order." The shift from a unipolar world (led by one superpower) to a multipolar one is described as "irreversible."

- **The Strategic Window for China:** Looking back at the Iraq War, the author notes it created a "permissive environment" for China's rise by draining U.S. resources and moral authority.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The tension between unilateralism and international law has evolved through distinct phases:

- **Post-Cold War (1991–2001):** The "Unipolar Moment." The U.S. emerged as the sole superpower. Interventions (like Kosovo) began to challenge the absolute nature of sovereignty.

- **The War on Terror (2001–2010):** The Iraq War (2003) serves as the primary milestone for "unilateral coercion." It led to the erosion of the "liberal international order" from within.

- **The Pivot and Polarization (2010–2020):** As China rose economically and the U.S. faced domestic fatigue from "forever wars," the world began shifting toward multipolarity.

- **The Present Crisis (2020s):** Tensions in West Asia (Iran) and South America (Venezuela) are seen as contemporary examples of the same old "regime-change" playbook, now meeting much stronger global resistance.

THE UNIPOLAR MOMENT (1991–2003)

Following the Cold War, the U.S. emerged as the sole dominant global hegemon.



THE IRAQ WAR TURNING POINT (2003)

Unilateral interventionism drained superpower resources and created a “permissive environment” for rivals to rise. Marks the start of the fading the unipolar moment.



THE RISE OF MULTIPOLARITY

Power is now shared among the U.S., China, EU, India, and Russia.



FUNCTIONAL DIFFERENCES: UNILATERALISM vs. MULTIPOLARITY

	UNILATERALISM (Fading)	MULTIPOLARITY (Emerging)
Decision Making	Acting alone without UN consent	Collective negotiation and coalitions
Primary Tool	Military Force (Hard Power)	Diplomacy and Economic influence
Focus	Regime Change & intervention	Sovereignty & Non-interference

CORE PILLARS OF THE NEW GLOBAL ORDER



SOVEREIGNTY & TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY

The supreme authority of a state over its territory; the bedrock of the Westphalian system.



HARD POWER VS. LEGITIMACY

Military force alone cannot sustain leadership; global influence requires moral authority and consensus.



INDIA'S STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

Navigating friction between power poles through “multi-alignment” to protect national interests.



U.S. Congress to vote on Iran war as debate rages on Washington's goals

War powers resolution gives lawmakers an opportunity to demand congressional approval before any further attacks are carried out; the resolution and a similar Bill in the House may not pass in the Republican-controlled Congress; even if they did, they will almost certainly be vetoed by Trump

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

The U.S. Senate is headed towards a vote on Wednesday on President Donald Trump's decision to embark on a war against Iran, an extraordinary test in Congress for a conflict that has rapidly spread across West Asia with no clear U.S. exit strategy.

The legislation, known as a war powers resolution, gives lawmakers an opportunity to demand congressional approval before any further attacks are carried out. The Senate resolution and a similar bill being voted on in the House later this week face unlikely paths through the Republican-controlled Congress and would almost certainly be vetoed by Mr. Trump even if they were to pass.

Nonetheless, the votes marked a weighty moment for lawmakers. Their decisions on the five-day-old war - which Mr. Trump entered without congressional approval - could determine the fates of U.S. military members, countless other lives and the future of the region.

"Wars without clear objectives do not remain small. They get bigger, bloodier, longer and more expensive," said Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer at a news conference on Tuesday. "This is



Rallying support: Trump administration officials have been a frequent presence on Capitol Hill this week as they try to reassure lawmakers that they have the situation under control. REUTERS

not a necessary war. It's a war of choice."

After launching a surprise attack against Iran on Saturday, Mr. Trump has scrambled to win support for a conflict that Americans of all political persuasions were already wary of entering. Trump administration officials have been a frequent presence on Capitol Hill this week as they try to reassure lawmakers that they have the situation under control.

6 U.S. personnel killed

"We are not going to put American troops in harm's way," Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters in a raucous news conference at the Capitol on Tuesday.

But six U.S. military members were killed over the weekend in a drone

strike in Kuwait. Hundreds of others in the region have died.

Mr. Trump has also not ruled out deploying U.S. ground troops. He has said he is hoping to end the bombing campaigns within a few weeks, but his goals for the war have shifted from regime change to stopping Iran from developing nuclear capabilities to crippling its navy and missile programmes.

"I think they are achieving great success with what they've done so far," Senate Majority Leader John Thune said on Tuesday, adding that what happens next in the country will be "largely up to the Iranian people."

Almost all Republican senators were readying to vote on Wednesday against the war powers resolution

said Sen. Tim Kaine, the Virginia Democrat leading the war powers resolution. "Everybody's got to declare whether they're for this war or against it."

This time it's different

Republican leaders have successfully, though narrowly, defeated a series of war powers resolutions pertaining to several other conflicts that Mr. Trump has entered or threatened to enter. This one, however, is different.

Unlike Mr. Trump's military campaigns against alleged drug boats or even Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro, the attack on Iran represents an open-ended conflict that is already ricocheting across the region. For Republicans who are used to operating in a political party dominated by Mr. Trump and his promises of keeping the U.S. out of foreign entanglements, the moment represented a bit of whiplash.

"War is ugly, it always has been ugly, but we're taking out a regime that has been trying to attack us for quite some time," said Sen. Markwayne Mullin, an Oklahoma Republican.

Meanwhile, Sen. Lindsey Graham, a South Carolina Republican who has long pushed Mr. Trump to engage overseas, argued that the widening conflict represented an opportunity for Arab and European countries to join in the

fight against Iran and the militant groups it supports.

"I don't mind people being on record as to whether or not they think this is a good idea," he told reporters, but also argued that too much power over the military was ceded to Congress in the War Powers Act, which mandates that presidents withdraw troops from a conflict within 90 days if there is no congressional authorisation.

On the other side of the Capitol, House leaders were also readying for a debate over the war followed by a vote on Thursday.

"I do believe we have the votes to defeat it, I certainly hope we do," House Speaker Mike Johnson said after an all-member briefing on Tuesday night.

Democrats' standing

Meanwhile, House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries said he expected a strong showing from Democrats in favour of the war powers resolution.

As lawmakers emerged from a closed-door briefing on Tuesday night, Rep. Gregory Meeks, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, implored the Trump administration to "come to Congress" and speak directly to the American people about the rationale for the war. His voice filled with emotion as he said, "Our young men and women's lives are on the line."

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **War Powers Resolution (1973):** A federal law intended to check the U.S. president's power to commit the United States to an armed conflict without the consent of the U.S. Congress.

- *Example:* If a President sends troops into a "hostile" situation, they must notify Congress within 48 hours and withdraw them within 60–90 days unless Congress authorizes the action.

- **Veto Power:** The constitutional right of the President to reject a decision or proposal made by a law-making body. A "veto" can only be overridden by a two-thirds majority in both the House and Senate.

- **Regime Change:** The replacement of one government with another, often by military force or political intervention.

- **Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF):** A specific bill passed by Congress that gives the President the authority to use the military. It is often debated whether old AUMFs (like those from 2001/2002) can be used for new, unrelated conflicts.

- **West Asia (Middle East):** A transcontinental region centered on Western Asia, Turkey, and Egypt. It is a focal point of U.S. foreign policy due to energy resources and strategic alliances.



- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core of the current debate centers on the **balance of power** between the President's role as Commander-in-Chief and Congress's sole power to "Declare War."

- **The Pro-Resolution Argument (Legislative Oversight):**

Senators like Tim Kaine and Chuck Schumer argue that "wars of choice" without clear objectives inevitably lead to "quagmires." They believe the Constitution requires the President to seek permission before initiating major hostilities to ensure public accountability.

- **The Executive/Supportive Argument (Strategic Flexibility):**

Administration officials and supporters like Sen. Lindsey Graham argue that the President needs the agility to respond to immediate threats (e.g., Iranian naval or missile threats). They view the War Powers Act as an unconstitutional infringement on Executive authority.

- **Shifting Objectives:** A major point of contention is the "mission creep." The goals have fluctuated from stopping nuclear development to "regime change" to protecting maritime interests, leading to concerns about a lack of an "exit strategy."

Historical Evolution of the Issue

Founding Era: The Framers of the U.S. Constitution split war powers—giving Congress the power to *declare* war (Article I) and the President the power to *direct* the military (Article II).

Cold War Expansion: During the Korean and Vietnam Wars, Presidents increasingly committed troops without formal declarations, leading to the "Imperial Presidency."

1973 War Powers Act: Passed over President Nixon's veto, this was a direct response to the Vietnam War, seeking to reclaim Congressional authority.

Post-9/11 Era: The 2001 AUMF (targeting those responsible for 9/11) has been used by multiple Presidents to justify various military actions across the globe, leading to the present-day legal friction regarding Iran.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL TUG-OF-WAR: U.S. WAR POWERS & THE IRAN CONFLICT

U.S. EXECUTIVE (ART. II) - COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF



EXECUTIVE AGILITY:

Claims "Strategic Flexibility" for "Rapid, Unilateral Response"



THE 60-90 DAY

"CLOCK": Troops must withdraw unless Congress authorizes within 90 days.



Requires President to notify Congress within 48 hours of action

U.S. LEGISLATURE (ART. I) - POWER TO DECLARE WAR

LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT:

Demands "Democratic Accountability" via "Deliberative, Public Debate" to prevent quagmires



THE "POWER OF THE PURSE":

Can defund troops to physically stop conflict (High-Risk Move).



THE GLOBAL RIPPLE EFFECT: IMPACT ON INDIA



8 MILLION
LIVES & ENERGY SECURITY

Conflict risks safety of Indian diaspora and spikes oil prices via Strait of Hormuz.



STRATEGIC AUTONOMY IN WEST ASIA

India must balance ties between U.S., Israel, and Iran to protect regional interests.

'Judiciary corruption' row: How new NCERT textbooks are drafted and cleared

Abhinaya Harigovind
New Delhi, March 4

AFTER THE Supreme Court imposed a "complete blanket ban" on the NCERT class 8 social science textbook over a section on "corruption in the judiciary", Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said the Centre is taking it "seriously" and that it would be "inquired into". He said action would be taken against those who were involved in preparing the chapter.

The preparation and oversight of the new textbooks is entrusted to select groups and committees of the NCERT, in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) 2023.

In its order last week, the Supreme Court had directed NCERT Director D P Sakkani to submit a comprehensive list and details concerning one of these committees — the National Syllabus and Teaching Learning

Material Committee (NSTC) — and the names and credentials of the textbook development team responsible for drafting the chapter on the judiciary.

Role of the NSTC

The NCERT constituted a 19-member NSTC in 2023, the same year that the NCFSE, the guiding document for the syllabus and textbooks, was developed. This overarching committee is tasked with developing the school syllabus and textbooks, working closely with curricular area groups (CAGs).

MC Pant, then the Chancellor at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), is the chairperson of the NSTC, with Manjul Bhargava, math professor at Princeton University, as its co-chairperson. In addition to the chairpersons, the committee now comprises 16 members after Bibek Debroy, Chairman of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (EAC-PM) and NSTC member, died in 2024.

Notable members of the NSTC include Sudha Murty, founder of Infosys Foundation; singer Shankar Mahadevan; Chamu Krishna Shastri, chairperson of the Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti; Sanjeev Sanyal, member, EAC-PM; retired Haryana-cadre IAS officer Surina Rajan; Michel Danino, guest professor, IIT Gandhinagar; Rabin Chhetri, SCERT Director, Siddim.

According to the notification that constituted the NSTC in 2023, the chairperson and the co-chairperson of the committee, with NCERT's support, will constitute CAGs. These groups will comprise experts who will develop the textbooks for each subject. "The NSTC will be free to invite other experts for advice, consultation, and support..." the notification says.

The 35-member CAG for social science was constituted in 2023 and is headed by Danino. The NCERT notification that constitutes the group includes current and former professors in the social sciences —

Heeraman Tiwari at JNU; Banabina Brahma at Kokrajhar University; Sita Ram Dubey, former head of the Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, BHU; and Meenakshi Jain, who taught history at DU's Gargi College, and was nominated to the Rajya Sabha last year.

The social science textbook

The social science textbook is prepared by a subset of the CAG, with a specially constituted textbook development team preparing its chapters. The draft thus prepared then undergoes revisions and reviews.

The social science book that was withdrawn last week listed 51 members in the textbook development team — including members of the NSTC for guidance, the CAG chairperson, contributors, and reviewers. Reviewers for this book included professors at the NCERT, teachers and the Director Principal of a private school in Gurgaon, and an associate professor at the Uni-

versity of Kashmir. It is then submitted to the NSTC for review.

In 2023, the NCERT also constituted a 13-member National Curriculum Frameworks Oversight Committee (NOC) to ensure "full alignment" of textbooks with the NCFSE. It is to support the NSTC "in various ways such as providing detailed orientation to the members of the NSTC" and the CAGs. The NOC is chaired by Jagbir Singh, Chancellor of the Central University of Punjab, and includes NSTC chairman MC Pant. The panel also includes Zoho Corporation founder Sridhar Vembu.

How textbooks were prepared in the past

The old NCERT school textbooks were published from 2006 to 2008, developed in line with the NCF of 2005. Different books were published for history, geography, and political science, unlike the current system, which encompasses all three themes in two

books. The process included an advisory committee for textbooks in social science headed by the late historian Hari Vasudevan, as well as a textbook development committee for each book.

The then Ministry of Human Resource Development formed a monitoring committee in 2005 to oversee the process of creating the syllabus and textbooks. It was tasked with ensuring that "textbooks are free of errors and distortions", and that "syllabi and textbooks finalised by the NCERT reflect the values enshrined in the Constitution in the organisation of knowledge in all subjects".

This panel was chaired by Prof Mrinal Miri, with Prof GP Deshpande as co-chairman. It included six representatives of state governments: school education secretary or principal secretary of four states, an SCERT director and a state school board chairperson. It included NCERT governing council members, and members of what was then the Central Advisory Board of Education.



- **Key Terms and Explanations**
- **NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training):** An autonomous organization that advises the Central and State Governments on policies for qualitative improvement in school education.
- **NEP 2020 (National Education Policy):** The foundational policy aiming to overhaul the Indian education system, emphasizing critical thinking over rote learning.
- **NCFSE 2023 (National Curriculum Framework for School Education):** The "blueprints" for what students should learn, derived from the NEP 2020.
- **NSTC (National Syllabus and Teaching Learning Material Committee):** A 19-member overarching body tasked with developing the actual syllabus and textbooks.
- **CAG (Curricular Area Groups):** Specialized sub-committees (e.g., for Social Sciences) that do the heavy lifting of drafting specific chapters.
- **NOC (National Curriculum Frameworks Oversight Committee):** A 13-member body ensuring that the new textbooks align perfectly with the NCFSE 2023.
- **Contempt of Court:** While the article mentions a "blanket ban" regarding "corruption in the judiciary," this relates to the legal boundary where criticism of the judiciary must not "scandalize" the court or lower its authority.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core of the issue lies in the **institutional mechanism** of how knowledge is curated for the next generation.

- **The Thesis:** The government argues that the drafting process is now more robust, multi-layered, and involves a wider array of experts (from mathematicians to musicians) to ensure a holistic education.

- **The Conflict:** A specific section in a Class 8 Social Science textbook regarding "judiciary corruption" led to a Supreme Court intervention. This highlights the tension between **academic freedom** (the right to discuss systemic issues) and **institutional integrity** (protecting the image of the judiciary).

- **Procedural Shift:** Unlike the 2005-2008 system where textbooks were subject-specific, the new system aims for a thematic "integrated" approach across Social Sciences.

Historical Evolution of the Issue



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graph LR; A[Historical Evolution of the Issue] --> B[Post-Independence (1950s-60s): Focus on nation-building and secularism. NCERT was established in 1961 to standardize this.]; B --> C[NCF 1975, 1988, and 2000: These reflected changing political ideologies, often leading to "textbook wars" over history and social values.]; C --> D[NCF 2005: Based on the Yash Pal Committee report "Learning Without Burden," it emphasized constructive learning. This framework governed textbooks for nearly two decades.]; D --> E[NEP 2020 & NCFSE 2023: The current phase, focusing on "Indian Ethos," 21st-century skills, and a complete revamp of the 2005 textbooks.];
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Post-Independence (1950s-60s): Focus on nation-building and secularism. NCERT was established in 1961 to standardize this.

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Decoding India's Textbook Drafting Process: Governance, Policy & The Judiciary Row

THE TEXTBOOK DRAFTING LIFECYCLE (POST-NEP 2020)



CASE STUDY: THE "JUDICIARY CORRUPTION" CONTROVERSY



SCALES OF JUSTICE vs. OPEN BOOK:
TENSION BETWEEN INSTITUTIONAL RESPECT AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

THE COMMITTEE FRAMEWORK:

Breakdown of high-level bodies responsible for the new curriculum

Body	Composition	Core Responsibility
NSTC	19 Members	Overseeing syllabus and final teaching-learning material development.
CAG	Subject Experts	Heavy-lifting of drafting specific chapters (e.g., Social Sciences).
NOC	13 Members	Ensuring absolute alignment between textbooks and NCFSE 2023 blueprints.



DEFINITION:
THE TRIGGER: CLASS 8 SOCIAL SCIENCE

A chapter mentioned "judiciary corruption," sparking a Supreme Court suo motu intervention.



KEY FINDING:
SUPREME COURT "BLANKET BAN"

The Court ordered an immediate ban, citing potential "criminal contempt" and institutional damage.



EXAMPLE:
THE VETTING GAP IDENTIFIED

Officials admitted no legal experts vetted the chapter before its publication and distribution.

How rupee fall could affect economy, IT sector, exports

The rupee breached the 92 mark for the first time. This could lead to costlier imports, higher inflation and changes to monetary policy



GEORGE MATHEW

THE ESCALATING conflict in West Asia is beginning to cast a long and ominous shadow over the Indian economy. The rupee breached the 92 mark for the first time on Wednesday, ending the day at 92.15 against the US dollar. This comes as surging crude oil prices and disrupted trade flows threaten to make imports costlier, stoke inflationary pressures and affect the country's monetary policy.

At the heart of the turmoil lies a sharp spike in energy prices. Brent crude futures have surged more than 10% in just a week, climbing to multi-year highs amid fears of supply disruption. Shipping traffic has slowed to a virtual standstill through the Strait of Hormuz, which carries nearly a fifth of the world's oil supply. Any prolonged shutdown of this strategic passage threatens to push crude prices even higher and pull down the rupee further.

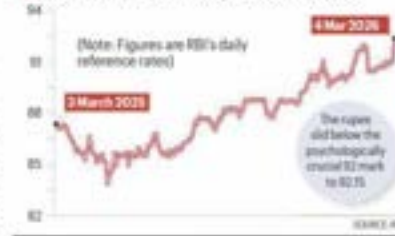
For India, which imports nearly 90% of its crude oil requirements, the implications are stark.

Threat of imported inflation

When the Indian currency depreciates, the first and most immediate casualty is the import bill. Crude oil, electronic components, fertilisers and industrial machinery — all priced in dollars — steadily become more expensive. The burden then steadily shifts to businesses and households, pushing up inflation and eroding purchasing power. The threat of imported inflation is now increasingly becoming a reality.

A \$1 rise in crude oil increases India's annual import bill by roughly \$1.3-2 billion, depending on total import volumes. This directly widens the current account deficit (CAD). India's CAD increased to \$13.2 billion (1.3% of GDP) in the third quarter of 2025-26 from \$11.3 billion (1.2% of GDP) in the same period last year, according to RBI data. "Our calculations show that every \$10 move in oil prices can raise the current account deficit by 0.3% of GDP, with the im-

Rupee vs dollar: A steady erosion of value



pact on inflation 20-30 bps) contingent on the extent of pass-through to retail prices," said Kaolika Rao, senior economist and executive director, DBS Bank.

"Energy-intensive industries, including aviation, logistics, paints and chemicals, are likely to experience margin compression due to rising input costs, while upstream oil producers could benefit from higher crude prices," said Manoranjan Sharma, chief economist at Infometrics Ratings.

Companies with foreign-currency borrowings face a sharper blow, as servicing overseas debt becomes costlier in rupee terms. The inflationary impulse is particularly worrying. Costlier crude oil filters through transport, manufacturing and logistics, eventually feeding into retail prices. "Higher oil prices widen India's import bill and current account concerns, leading to defensive positioning in the rupee. The positive momentum seen post-budget and after the US-India trade understanding has temporarily faded under global risk-off sentiment," said Jitendra Trivedi, vice president, L&F Securities.

"The rupee may weaken further as the proportion of GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council, consisting of six Gulf countries) in India's remittances is highest, and a prolonged period of conflict may impact remittance inflow into India. The short-term impact would be an increase in commodity prices and some supply disruption. Overall, the impact depends on how long conflict will continue," said Devendra Pant, Chief Economist, India Ratings & Research.

There is also the sensitive issue of de-



Shipping traffic through the Strait of Hormuz has slowed to a virtual standstill.

sign capital flows. As foreign institutional investors, who account for a significant share of trading activity in Indian markets, measure returns in dollar terms, a falling rupee diminishes those returns when funds are repatriated. The result can be bouts of IT selling, adding pressure on stock prices and amplifying market volatility.

In an interconnected global economy, currency depreciation is not an isolated event. It impacts trade balances, corporate earnings, inflation expectations and investor sentiment, leaving policymakers to navigate a narrow and increasingly uncertain path.

Exporters set to gain

If a weakening rupee unsettles importers and policymakers, it offers a measure of relief to exporters. For companies that earn in dollars but incur a substantial portion of their costs in rupees, currency depreciation can act as a natural hedge. Every dollar of revenue translates into a higher rupee realisation, but all that works if there is some stability in the currency movements.

Experts say India's IT services majors, pharmaceutical exporters and specialty chemical manufacturers are among the principal beneficiaries. Their billing is largely denominated in dollars and euros, while employee costs and operating expenses remain predominantly domestic. A softer rupee therefore enhances profitability without any immediate change in volumes. In an environment where global demand remains uneven, currency support

can provide a timely earnings buffer. IT companies and select export-oriented businesses may find relative support amid global risk aversion and a strengthening US dollar," Sharma said.

For the technology sector in particular, the exchange rate tailwind comes at a critical juncture. IT companies have been grappling with slower client spending and the disruptive churn triggered by rapid advances in artificial intelligence (AI). A weaker rupee, by lifting earnings, could help stabilise quarterly results and lend support to battered stock prices.

Pharmaceutical exporters also stand to gain from improved realisations, especially in regulated markets such as the US. Specialty chemical firms with long-term global contracts may see margin expansion if input costs remain stable.

Monetary policy impact

Rising inflation places the Reserve Bank of India in an increasingly delicate position. As price pressures build, particularly from imported crude, the central bank's room for manoeuvre narrows. It may be forced to keep interest rates higher for longer, or even consider additional tightening, to prevent inflation expectations from becoming unanchored. Such a stance, while necessary for macroeconomic stability, inevitably raises borrowing costs across the system.

"We don't expect the central bank to shift policy gear at this juncture, with an extended pause still at play," Rao said.

The RBI kept the key repo rate unchanged at 5.25% in the February monetary policy review.

Moreover, if the rate hardens, costlier credit tends to cool consumer spending and slow fresh investment. Equity markets, which thrive on liquidity and growth visibility, could also feel the strain as tighter monetary conditions weigh on corporate earnings and valuations.

The central bank may even have to reassess its inflation projections if elevated oil prices persist. In February, the RBI revised retail inflation at 2.7% against 2% in FY 2026. For now, neither the government nor oil marketing companies have signalled an immediate increase in retail fuel prices. But if global crude continues its upward march, the cushion of price restraint may prove temporary.

Some relief for IT sector

For tech sector, the exchange rate tailwind comes at a critical moment. IT firms are grappling with slower client spending and AI disruption.

A weaker rupee, by lifting earnings, could help stabilise quarterly results and support stock prices.

The Geopolitical Trigger



Conflict in West Asia spikes Brent crude prices & disrupts global oil supply chains



The \$2 Billion Oil Impact
Every \$1 rise in crude oil increases India's annual import bill by \$1.5-2 billion.

Rupee Breaches the 92 Mark



High dollar demand for all imports pushes the INR to psychologically crucial record lows

The RBI's Policy Dilemma



Balancing interest rate hikes to defend the Rupee against the need for growth

Impact & Strategic Response

Winners vs. Losers



IT exporters gain from dollar earnings



Domestic households face higher energy costs and reduced purchasing power

The Path to Resilience



Shifting to renewables & Rupee-denominated trade to reduce long-term dependence on the Dollar



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Economic Indicator & Impact of Depreciation

Current Account Deficit (CAD)	Widens as import costs exceed export earnings
Imported Inflation	Rises as costlier oil/logistics cascade through the economy
FII/FPI Flows	Outflows increase as investors seek "safe-haven" US assets



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